



Baltimore Ecosystem Study Diversity Plan

2017-2022

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OVERVIEW

Background

Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES) recognizes the responsibilities and opportunities of conducting research where people live. As individuals and groups are a part of the urban ecosystem, the actions and perspectives of the many individuals who live, work, recreate and visit can affect the physical environment, making it critical for BES to better understand and involve a diverse group of individuals to reflect those living in and impacting Baltimore's urban ecosystem.

In 2016 the Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES) Steering Committee drafted a diversity statement. In 2017 a working group convened to develop a Diversity Plan. Working group members reviewed existing BES methods of ensuring diversity in its participants as well as diversity plans from other studies and institutions. A work session was held in April 2017 to garner input on a preliminary draft Diversity Plan from BES quarterly meeting attendees. The draft plan was amended to reflect the responses from the meeting attendees. Further feedback was incorporated from key BES leaders and from an external group of individuals with expertise in matters of diversity and inclusion. The BES Project Management Committee adopted the Diversity Plan in December 2017.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to outline steps to increase the diversity and inclusivity within the BES community of researchers, educators, and participants as a catalyst for new ideas and broader perspectives. Every person and organization involved with BES plays a role in fostering diversity. This plan seeks to identify opportunities and barriers to the successful inclusion of a diverse network of collaborators and establish actions to proactively address them in order to achieve the highest standards of inclusion.

Diversity Definition

Diversity is the range of human differences. It includes but is not limited to, visible and invisible characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, political beliefs, levels of education and geographic location.

Diversity Vision

BES provides an inclusive environment that respects and embraces a culture of collaboration and flexibility so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential, resulting in work that is informed by and informs participants (those directly involved) and stakeholders (those affected) in the long-term ecological research project.

BES Mission

The Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES) seeks to:

- Pursue excellence in social-ecological research in an urban system;
- Maintain positive engagement with communities, environmental institutions, and government agencies;
- Educate and inform the public, students, and organizations that have need of scientific knowledge; and,
- Assemble and nurture a diverse and inclusive community of researchers, educators, and participants.

Recognitions

Baltimore Ecosystems Study:

- Recognizes that many factors including personal identity, social position, historical context and one's relationship with an ecosystem influences and are influenced by our understandings of ourselves, one another, and local and global communities.
- Respects and integrates different perspectives through inclusion of a diverse group of researchers and concerted efforts to understand community context in which its research operates.
- Encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.
- Includes diverse perspectives and participants as a means to make inclusive, well-rounded policies and decisions.

Limitations

BES acknowledges and embraces diversity as a beneficial and critical component of both scientific excellence and the urban ecological research it performs. It is acknowledged that a long-term research project that includes a broad network of collaborators is limited in its ability to make swift changes in further diversifying its participation because project collaborators are responsible for much of the recruitment and engagement that occurs on behalf of the project. Therefore, this plan seeks to enhance diversity within existing programs and collaborations by focusing on raising awareness and educating collaborators on diversity-related topics to instill the importance of diversity and inclusion as priorities within BES while also taking steps to enhance BES as a welcoming environment so that anyone becoming a part of BES feels comfortable, supported and able to contribute their talents and perspectives to the best of their abilities.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

1. **Enhance and ensure BES as an inclusive and diverse environment.**
 - a. Establish a committee to spearhead and monitor diversity plan implementation.
 - i. Develop and ensure the implementation of an annual work plan for diversity plan activities approved by BES Project Management Committee.
 - ii. Summarize relevant information in an annual progress report on diversity.
 - iii. Actively seek feedback to identify opportunities to improve BES as diverse and inclusive environment.
 - b. Provide resources to current BES collaborators, graduate students and postdocs to raise awareness of diversity-related topics
 - i. Offer training sessions, discussions or presentations on diversity- or inclusivity-related topics throughout the year.
 - ii. Develop and/or distribute tools and materials that may help collaborators recruit and involve more diverse participants in their work.
2. **Foster a welcoming, supportive environment for collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs and associates.**
 - a. Provide a smooth ‘onboarding’ process to introduce BES to new collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs.
 - i. Adapt BES orientation and Field Safety and Community Outreach training and manual to include a diversity awareness section.
 - ii. Produce an annual directory of BES staff, Investigators and key partner representatives.
 - b. Increase collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs familiarity with one another and the expertise and resources available within the BES network.
 - i. Profile or feature the research of those who do not hold leadership positions in BES to highlight each researcher within a five year period.
 - ii. Create and distribute a brief, easy-to-read annual or bi-annual report of activities to distribute to BES collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs, policy makers and other interested parties.
3. **Strategically utilize the BES network and communications to raise awareness of opportunities to encourage the participation of collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs with relative or complementary interests.**
 - a. Proactively seek opportunities to introduce BES to new audiences that may use BES data in their work or may become BES collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs.
 - i. Deliver presentations of BES research at potential participants and partners forums to increase awareness of BES and opportunities to use its research to advance cross-disciplinary work.
 - ii. Determine strategy for evaluating potential, high impact, coalitions or committees in which to become involved, and ensure representation in key local coalitions.
4. **Build on academic enrichment and internship programs to provide opportunities for all youth and young adults involved with BES to gain exposure to ecological sciences and science-based work.**
 - a. Work with partners to expand opportunities for Baltimore middle and high school-aged youth to learn more about careers in science.
 - i. Continue to collaborate with Parks & People Foundation’s Branches program, and find opportunities for Branches interns to learn about or contribute to BES research.
 - ii. Proactively seek opportunities to partner with Baltimore schools or other organizations to provide programs and field trips that expose youth to science.
 - b. Provide undergraduates, especially those who reflect the local community, research opportunities with BES to build interest and self confidence in careers in science and urban ecosystems.
 - i. Continue to offer summer REU positions to students in BES science.
 - ii. Explore additional opportunities for undergraduate involvement in BES science.

MEASURES & TIMELINE

Action	Success Measure	Metric	Frequency of Measurement
1. Enhance and ensure BES as an inclusive and diverse environment.			
a. Objective: Establish a committee to create a diversity plan and spearhead its implementation.			Annually
i. Establish a committee to spearhead and monitor diversity plan its implementation.	Committee recruited; meets at established times; produces and implements all action items in annual work plan	Number of committee members; Number of non-Cary/No-PMC members; meeting attendance; ability to function according to work plan	One time
ii. Summarize relevant information in an annual progress report on diversity.	Annual work plan implemented	Work occurs as defined by work plan - goal of 90% of tasks occur on time in year 1	Annually
iii. Actively seek feedback to identify opportunities to improve BES as diverse and inclusive environment.	Annual surveys distributed to BES community. BES collaborators, graduate students and postdocs report feeling comfortable making suggestions of ways to increase diversity and improve inclusiveness	Number of surveys and suggestions collected	Annually
b. Provide resources to current BES collaborators, graduate students and postdocs to raise awareness of diversity-related topics.			
i. Offer training sessions, discussions or presentations on diversity- or inclusivity-related topics throughout the year.	Attendees are knowledgeable about BES, its protocols, what it does, and who is involved; 90% of attendees report that they are aware of BES diversity goals and 85% will proactively seek ways to advance BES diversity goals	Attendance at orientation; 85% of new collaborators, graduate students and postdocs receive orientation in year 1; pre- and post-survey results (Additional or more specific actions and measures are likely in the future as benchmarks are set by Diversity Committee)	Annually
ii. Develop and/or distribute tools and materials that may help collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs in involving more diverse audiences in their work.	Collaborators, graduate students and postdocs receive information about resources or opportunities; advice and technical assistance is provided if researchers seek to involve community members in a project	Opportunities or resources shared; # of projects involving community members in work (citizen science, etc.); results of community member surveys	Annually
2. Foster a welcoming, supportive environment for collaborators, graduate students, postdocs, and associates.			
a. Provide a smooth 'onboarding' process to introduce BES to new collaborators.			
i. Adapt BES orientation and Field Safety and Community Outreach training and manual to include a diversity awareness section.	All new BES collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs understand BES commitment to diversity and are familiar with Diversity Plan goals and objectives.	Number of individuals signing to verify they've read the manual; # of individuals attending in-person training	Annually
ii. Provide a directory of BES staff, Investigators, and key partner representatives.	Directory is distributed to all collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs and increases ease of recognition of BES collaborators; enables readers to know who to contact based on skill.	Annual updates made; directory available on website; directory circulates to BES email list and/or annual meeting attendees	Annually
b. Increase collaborators, graduate students, and postdocs familiarity with one another and the expertise and resources available within the BES network.			
i. Profile or feature the research of those who do not hold leadership positions in BES to highlight each researcher within a five year period.	All BES researchers and their work are featured to educate others about their work and to recognize them as valuable members of the BES community.	Number of profiles; # of reads/opens; # of likes/shares	Annually
ii. Create and distribute a brief, easy-to-read annual report of activities to distribute to BES collaborators, policy makers and other interested parties.	Collaborators, graduate students, postdocs, and interested parties are informed about BES work and project statuses.	Number of reports produced; # of downloads; # of opens	Annually
3. Strategically utilize the BES network and communications to raise awareness of opportunities to encourage the participation of collaborators with relative or complementary interests.			
a. Proactively seek opportunities to introduce BES to new audiences that may use BES data in their work or may become BES collaborators.			
i. Deliver presentations of BES research at potential participants and partners forums to increase awareness of BES and opportunities to use its research to advance cross-disciplinary work.	BES collaborators, graduate students and postdocs introduce new people and organizations to BES, and provide opportunities for involvement.	Number of presentations; attendance; attendee names and results (if they become involved later)	Quarterly
ii. Determine strategy for evaluating potential, high impact, coalitions or committees in which to become involved, and ensure representation in key local coalitions.	Awareness of BES work increases among Greater Baltimore area leaders with relative or complementary interests.	Number of coalitions; Number of meetings attended; collaborations formed; percent (%) of survey responses stating BES research is used by coalition or committee members	Annually
4. Build on academic enrichment and internship programs to provide opportunities for all youth and young adults involved with BES to gain exposure to ecological sciences and science-based work.			
a. Work with partners to expand opportunities for Baltimore middle and high school-aged youth to learn more about careers in science.			
i. Continue to collaborate with Parks & People Foundation's Branches program, and find opportunities for Branches interns to learn about or contribute to BES research.	200 high school aged interns in Baltimore learn about ecology and related sciences as a potential career options over a five year period	# youth; # of data points collected by Branches youth; hours spent with BES	Quarterly

Action	Success Measure	Metric	Frequency of Measurement
<i>b. Provide undergraduates research opportunities with BES to build interest and self confidence in careers in science and urban ecosystems.</i>			
i. Continue to offer summer REU positions to diverse students in BES science.	BES REU opportunities are advertised broadly, and receive a diverse pool of applications. Diverse students participate in the BES REU experience. Students report positive influences on their interest and/or confidence in pursuing a career in science and urban ecosystems.	Size and diversity of applicant pool. Nature of student participants in BES REU opportunities. Career and/or educational attainment of alumni. Positive responses on surveys.	Annually
ii. Explore additional opportunities for undergraduate involvement in BES science.	BES participates in cross-site REU discussions for supporting REU and other undergraduates in learning about science and science careers.	Student participants report success.	Annually

ACCOUNTABILITY & OVERSIGHT

The Diversity Committee will be appointed by the BES Director. The Diversity Committee is responsible for developing annual work plans and ensuring timely and successful completion of work called for in the annual work plan. Further, the Committee should evaluate information that indicates changes in diversity of BES researchers and other participants.

The Diversity Committee should consist of no fewer than five members, comprised of Cary Institute staff, BES partners and investigators and, as possible, outside experts on diversity and inclusion.

It shall provide periodic reports at Project Management Committee meetings. It will meet quarterly to check progress on plan progress and to address any issues as needed. It shall submit a written summary of its progress and challenges annually to the director for inclusion in the annual report.

APPENDIX 1 - DEFINITIONS

Collaborator: Individuals affiliated with BES due to their status as Cary staff person assigned to the project, an Investigator, a representative of a partner organization, or a BES committee member.

BES Network: Autonomous entities including formal collaborators, informal partners, engaged stakeholders and others who coordinate through BES activities as a unified group.

Diversity: Diversity is the range of human differences includes but is not limited to, visible and invisible characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, political beliefs, levels of education and geographic location.

*Minority*¹: A minority is a racial or ethnic group that is a small percentage of the U.S. population. Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders, Asians, and persons reporting more than one race are minority groups.

*Scientists and engineers*²: In this report, persons classified as scientists and engineers are residents of the United States who have a baccalaureate degree or higher and are either educated as or are working as a scientist or engineer. A baccalaureate or higher degree is a bachelor's, graduate, doctoral, or professional degree.

Stakeholder: Those affected by BES actions, objectives and policies.

*Underrepresented minority*³: This category comprises three racial or ethnic minority groups (blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians or Alaska Natives) whose representation in science and engineering education or employment is smaller than their representation in the U.S. population.

¹ National Science Foundation (2017, January). Glossary and key to acronyms. "Minority". Available online at: <https://nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17310/digest/glossary-and-key-to-acronyms/>

² National Science Foundation (2017, January). Glossary and key to acronyms. "Scientists and engineers". Available online at: <https://nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17310/digest/glossary-and-key-to-acronyms/>

³ National Science Foundation (2017, January). Glossary and key to acronyms. "Underrepresented minority". Available online at: <https://nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17310/digest/glossary-and-key-to-acronyms/>